Press release

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Met. Office experts predict the risk of global warming

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Experts from The Met. Office's Hadley Centre, the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory and other scientific organisations in Germany and the USA, have taken another major step forward in making their climate predictions.

Until now climate change forecasts have contained little information on the degree of uncertainty in those predictions. That is set to change with an article published in this week's Nature which describes work done to estimate the degree of uncertainty in climate predictions over the next half century.

By 2040 the experts predict that global temperatures are likely to have risen by a minimum of 1.0°C and a maximum of 2.5°C since pre-industrial times.

These findings have been developed by comparing simulations of historical climate change with reality and investigating differences between the two. That research can be carried forward to quantify the uncertainties in future predictions.

This new work will be very useful to organisations and businesses looking to plan for risks associated with climate change. The Hadley Centre's Peter Stott, one of the report's authors said: "Policymakers and planners need not only the best predictions of future climate change, but an idea of the uncertainty in those predictions. Until now we have only been able to estimate uncertainty subjectively. For the first time we have made an objective estimate of the likely range of global warming rates over the next 50 years. With these estimates, and more refined ones to come, planners will be able to use our predictions in risk analysis when making judgements about, for example, the height of coastal defences or the need for more reservoirs."

Dr Myles Allen of the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory said: "The goal of this study is to the assess the current level of uncertainty in 50-year-timescale forecasts of human-induced climate change. For the first time, we are using observations of climate change as it's happening to pin down what is likely to happen next."

Notes:

The Met. Office authors of this report are Peter Stott and John Mitchell.

'The other authors are Myles Allen (Rutherford Appleton Laboratory), Tom Delworth (NOAA) and Reiner Schnur (Max Planck Institute).

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